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->From the Editor's Keyboard              "Saying it like it is!"
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Another long week, but at least the weather has been Spring-like for a
little while. I can get used to this kind of weather, certainly! And
although the pollen counts have been higher than usual for this time of
the year, I'll deal with the little discomfort from it. The trees and
flowers are blooming; the grass already needs cutting again - the rites
of Spring work are upon us, or at least for me.

Lots of politics and economic news, but I'm staying away from those
subjects for awhile. They're just too much to deal with these days;
and I certainly don't see many of us much better off than a year ago.

So, I'm going to essentially take the night off, and relax. I'll leave
the deep thoughts to Joe this week; I'm sure he'll have some good opinions
to share with you, as usual.

Until next time...


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->A-ONE User Group Notes!  -  Meetings, Shows, and Info!
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             ACEC 2010 VINTAGE COMPUTER AND VIDEO GAME SWAP MEET

GREAT NEWS ATARI FANS!!!

The Atari Computer Enthusiasts of Columbus will be holding the annual
vintage computer and video game swap meet on Saturday September 11th 2010.
It will be held at the same place as last year. As you might notice, we
have a new name. This year we are going to include all vintage and classic
computers and video games, systems, accessories, games, and software.

Oakland Park Community Building
980 Lenore Ave.
Columbus, Oh.

Right now the time for the swap meet is from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Admission is FREE! FREE! FREE!

That is right, it is free for both vendors and shoppers! Vendors, please
contact us to reserve tables. As it will be first come first serve. We
may have to limit the number of tables for each vendor. We have a new
feature this year that will allow dealers to pick out what particular
tables they want. Please check out our web site for further information
and updates.

http://www.angelfire.com/oh4/acec/acec.html

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone and
Corporate America has struck yet another blow for Wall Street.

You may have heard on the news the other day that General Motors has just
paid back eight billion dollars in bail-out money plus interest to the
government. That's good, right?

I mean, it shows that business is good, and that they can be trusted to pay
back money, and that they're "doing something right", right?

Wellllll....

First of all, I'm not too sure if they've got money in their coffers
because their business is good, or because Toyota's business is bad.
I won't say that Toyota is circling the drain or anything, but right now
they're not selling the number of cars that they used to. So if someone is
looking to buy a car but not looking seriously at Toyota right now, that
effectively gives GM a larger share of the "car buyer pie".

But still, they DID make some money. Regardless of why, they made some
money and they paid back a large portion of the bail-out money plus
interest.

Now, for those of you who chafe at the idea of the government spending
your hard-earned tax dollars to save GM from its own short-sightedness,
think about this: It's not just the CEO and Board Members who were saved.
The list probably included YOUR name too. Check your IRA or mutual fund
and see if GM stock isn't part of your portfolio. I'd be amazed if it
wasn't... it's been a staple of mutual funds for decades.

So what would have happened if we'd just let GM fail? Well, first of all,
you've got to consider the tens of thousands of people in this country
alone who would be thrown out of work. How do you think THAT would affect
the economy? Then there's "the Toyota thing" again... if GM had shut down,
do you think Toyota wouldn't be doing a little better than it is? I mean,
it's one thing to think about GM selling cars while Toyota's selling "oops"

cars... it'd be another thing all together if GM was selling NO cars and Toyota was selling "oops" cars.

Then there's the stock thing. It's a fact of corporate life these days. Companies sell stock. Where things have gone so terribly wrong, in my opinion, is that these companies have come to see their stock has become their end product, not the cars and trucks they produce. The cars and trucks are now just an inconvenient intermediate step to them... something they have to do to get their stock offering built.

I had hoped that, after this brush with disaster and the need for billions of dollars in government bail-outs, that the entire industry would... 'wise up'... and see the err of their ways and get back to what made their industry the envy of the world; the dedication of both management and employees, the working relationship between the two and extended all the way to the car buyer... not the stock buyer.

So yeah, I was hopeful when I heard that the company had paid back eight billion dollars. And as I was wondering what was left unsaid.. as I was asking myself how much GM had received in bail-outs, the news reporter said something that filled me with despair...

"GM management says that they plan to pay the remaining outstanding bail-out money they received with profits from stock offerings."

DAMMIT! Don't they get it? Didn't they learn anything? Their power doesn't come from their stock offerings... at least it shouldn't. Their product... what generates their revenue... is their cars and trucks, not the value of their stock. They haven't learned. <sigh>

I know how hard it is to either learn something new or un-learn something that you shouldn't have learned in the first place. And this falls into the latter category. American car manufacturers were once the envy of the business world. Yes, they had some trouble in the early 80's or so... and even before that... remember some of the car models out there? I'm not going to mention any names or models, because just as there are always a few bad ones, and there will always be someone who got a good one and someone who got a bad one.

Anyway, the American car industry took a beating for a while because they got comfortable complacent and they let quality slip. Foreign car makers gained a foothold. It was only then that the American auto industry got on it's feet and began to make strides toward where they should have been all along.

But then came what I like to call "the Wall Street Connection"... the idea that it was stock that a company grows on and not its product. What happens then is that people only look at the next quarter... the lifespan of the stock offering... how it'll look on the balance sheet, how long the stock will look attractive and remain desirable, not how long their new car model will remain desirable or attractive. Remember The Buick Limited? The Ford Country Squire and LTD? THAT is what drew people to a car company, not the value of the stock... stock was something that companies used to finance expansion and growth, not their bonuses and such. And THAT is where we have to get back to.

Well, that's it for this time around, folks. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING


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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Bushnell Returns to Atari!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   New Call of Duty Launched!
                                   Brain Games - No Smarter!


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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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              Nolan Bushnell Comes Back to Atari on Board of Directors

It all comes full circle for Nolan Bushnell, the man who created Atari
almost 40 years ago but later sold it away and subsequently left. Now he's
back at the company as a member of the board of directors.

Bushnell founded Atari in 1972 and helped create the video game industry
with the Atari 2600 system and games like Pong. He was later ousted by the
company when he sold it under financial distress.

Since then, Bushnell's contributions to the video game industry have
tapered away but he has never been forgotten. The visionary has been
inducted into the Consumer Electronics Association Hall of Fame as well as
the Video Game Hall of Fame. He also went on to found Chuck E Cheese.

With two executives recently leaving the Atari Board of Directors, Atari
has asked Bushnell to come back on in a consulting role.

"I am very excited to be reacquainted with Atari at a time when it is
poised to make interesting strides in key growth areas of the games
industry. "The company and its iconic brands have always been important to
me, and I look forward to further guiding them at the board level," said
Bushnell.

In his new position, Bushnell will be representing BlueBay High Yield
Investment.

The company could use some fresh blood, as it has been tracking with dismal
numbers for much of the 2000s, despite acquiring a handful of other studios
and bringing in high-level executives like Sony's Phil Harrison.

"The addition of Mr. Bushnell ... comes at a time when Atari has increased
its focus on its iconic brand and world-renowned game franchises while
further expanding its business online," said Atari in a statement.

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 'Most Successful Launch Ever'

Holy cut-and-paste press releases it's a slow news week, so how about this one from Activision that Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 has broken - wait for it - another record! That's right, the game that keeps on giving - be it content controversy, sales plaudits, or reciprocating lawsuits - can add another trophy to its bulging display case.

Guinness World Records just stamped Modern Warfare 2 "the most successful entertainment launch of all-time." The former record holder? Rockstar's Grand Theft Auto IV, which topped $500 million worldwide in its first sales week.

Modern Warfare 2, by contrast, pulled a cool $401 million worldwide in its first 24 hours of release. Compare with GTA IV's $310 million or Halo 3's $170 million during their respective first day sales windows. No wonder everyone's a bit prickly about series developer Infinity Ward's recent unanticipated attrition.

"Video game releases such as the Call of Duty series have outperformed the launches of major Hollywood blockbusters for several years and the day-one sales for Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 proved once again that video games have become cultural events in their own right," said Guinness World Records Gamer's Edition Editor Gaz Deaves in the press release. "The fan movement and hype surrounding this game in the run-up to launch was almost unprecedented in scale; we acknowledged early on that the big question wasn't if it would break all-time entertainment records, but rather by how much."

And Activision's self-congratulatory take:

"This achievement is a reflection of the support from our community of fans around the world," said Creative Strategist, Robert Bowling from developer Infinity Ward. "The Call of Duty series and Modern Warfare have been our passion - we've dedicated our lives to giving our best, so it's an honour to be recognised by setting a new standard among all entertainment properties."

The sales figures used were based on Activision's internal estimates as of March 1, 2010.

Brain Games Don't Make You Smarter

It sounded like a win-win situation: Persuade growing kids or seniors at risk of dementia to play video games that would challenge their minds and boost their brainpower, in effect making them "smarter." This idea - backed by some kind of research, at least - led to the creation of the "brain game" genre, with titles like Nintendo's Brain Age series becoming bestsellers.

Alas, science has been poking into the subject, and a new study - the largest trial to date in this field, comprising more than 11,000 volunteer subjects ages 18 to 60 - 2008 study of 600 Scottish schoolchildren found that brain games helped to improve scores on math tests significantly after

nine weeks of playing a series of games (and they even helped get kids to class on time).

But a 2009 study of French children found no evidence to support the claims that Brain Age improved cognitive ability, calling it "charlatanism" to suggest that a video game could make you more intelligent.

Ultimately it's possible that playing games that require intense focus may improve concentration. And it's clear that there's benefit in using games to learn certain material: Playing a math-oriented game will probably make a child who's just learning the subject better at math, for example. The scientists behind the most recent study also leave open the possibility that brain games may help very young children and the elderly, but note that those claims still need to be tested scientifically before doctors start prescribing Nintendos as treatment.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Pennsylvania District Took 56,000 Images on Student Laptops

A suburban school district secretly captured at least 56,000 webcam photographs and screen shots from laptops issued to high school students, its lawyer acknowledged Monday.

"It's clear there were students who were likely captured in their homes," said lawyer Henry Hockeimer, who represents the Lower Merion School District.

None of the images, captured by a tracking program to find missing computers, appeared to be salacious or inappropriate, he said. The district said it remotely activated the tracking software to find 80 missing laptops in the past two years.

The Philadelphia Inquirer first reported Monday on the large number of images recovered from school servers by forensic computer experts, who were hired after student Blake Robbins filed suit over the tracking practice.

Robbins still doesn't know why the district deployed the software tracking program on his computer, as he had not reported it lost or stolen, his lawyer said.

The FBI has opened a criminal investigation into possible wiretap violations by the district, and U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter, of Pennsylvania, has introduced a bill to include webcam surveillance under the federal wiretap statute.

The district photographed Robbins 400 times during a 15-day period last fall, sometimes as he slept in bed or was half-dressed, according to his lawyer, Mark Haltzman. Other times, the district captured screen shots

of instant messages or video chats the Harriton High School sophomore had with friends, he said.

"Not only was Blake Robbins being spied upon, but every one of the people he was IM chatting with were spied upon," said Haltzman, whose lawsuit alleges wiretap and privacy violations. "They captured pictures of people that have nothing to do with Harriton. It could be his cousin from Connecticut."

About 38,000 of the images were taken over several months from six computers the school said were stolen from a locker room.

The tracking program took images every 15 minutes, usually capturing the webcam photo of the user and a screen shot at the same time. The program was sometimes turned on for weeks or months at a time, Hockeimer said.

"There were no written policies or procedures governing the circumstances surrounding activating the program and the circumstances regarding turning off the activations," Hockeimer said.

Robbins was one of about 20 students who had not paid the $55 insurance fee required to take the laptops home but was the only one tracked, Haltzman said.

The depositions taken to date have provided contradictory testimony about the reasons for tracking Robbins' laptop. One of the two people authorized to activate the program, technology coordinator Carol Cafiero, invoked her Fifth Amendment right not to answer questions at the deposition, Haltzman said.

About 10 school officials had the right to request an activation, Hockeimer disclosed Monday.

The tracking program helped police identify a suspect not affiliated with the school in the locker room theft, Hockeimer said. The affluent Montgomery County district distributes the Macintosh notebook computers to all 2,300 students at its two high schools, Hockeimer said.

As part of the lawsuit, a federal judge this week is set to begin a confidential process of showing parents the images that were captured of their children.

The school district expects to release a written report on an internal investigation in the next few weeks, Hockeimer said. School board President David Ebby has pledged the report will contain "all the facts - good and bad."

Spycam Case Widens with 'Thousands' of Images Cited

The plot is thickening in the Lower Merion spycam case. A new motion filed late last week by a student's parents contends the Pennsylvania school district captured thousands of images of students without their knowledge via software on their school-supplied laptops.

When the case broke in the winter, school officials said only a handful of images had been taken, and only in response to reports of stolen laptops. But the new motion also mentions that web-site visits and

online chats were monitored.

In February, the family of teenager Blake Robbins filed suit against the school district for invasion of privacy, theft of private information, and "unlawful interaction and access" to electronic communication without his or his family's knowledge or authorization.

The Robbins family said it first learned of the remote-monitoring capability on Nov. 11, when an assistant principal at one of the district's two high schools told Blake that he was "engaged in improper behavior in his home," according to the original lawsuit, and the evidence was a photograph from the webcam in his laptop. As alleged in the suit, the father then verified with the assistant principal that the district can remotely activate and view through the webcam of the son's laptop - a surveillance capability unknown to the family or other families.

The motion indicates that, following a court order requiring that photos be preserved as evidence, the family discovered that more than 400 photos of Robbins had been taken surreptitiously, as well as "thousands" of other students.

The motion also indicates that the collection of photos, instant messages, and web visits were viewed by the IT and administrative staff as entertainment. One e-mail cited called the collection of images "like a little soap opera," and information coordinator Carol Cafiero is said to have responded, "I know. I love it!"

Cafiero has been placed on administrative leave, as has another IT staff person.

When the story first broke, the school district said it had turned on the LANRev monitoring software in the laptops distributed to students only 42 times, following that number of reports about lost, stolen or missing units. The school said it only did so to track down equipment, but the Robbins family said Blake never reported his laptop lost or missing.

The district said the software on Blake's laptop was turned on because he had not paid a $55 insurance fee on time.

The FBI is reportedly looking into the case, and the district said it has retained the services of former federal prosecutor Henry E. Hockeimer Jr. to assist in a "comprehensive review" of the situation. It also said it had disabled the LANRev monitoring software, although it retained the ability to take a still image of the computer user and the desktop in case of a missing or stolen unit.

Brad Shimmin, an analyst for industry research firm Current Analysis, said the case is a "wake-up call" for businesses as well as schools. "People will self-police," he said, if there is full disclosure about the conditions for using equipment or software supplied by the organization."

The solution, he said, "is transparency."

Password System Lost in Google Theft

Among the losses Google sustained when intruders stole computer information in December was a company treasure: a password system, The New York Times reported Tuesday.

"Ever since Google disclosed in January that Internet intruders had stolen information from its computers, the exact nature and extent of the theft has been a closely guarded company secret," the report said, citing an unnamed person with direct knowledge of the investigation.

That person "now says that the losses included one of Google?s crown jewels, a password system that controls access by millions of users worldwide to almost all of the company?s Web services, including e-mail and business applications," the Times report said.

Named Gaia for the Greek goddess of the earth, the program "was attacked in a lightning raid taking less than two days last December," the report cited the person as saying.

The software program is meant to allow users and employees to sign in with a sole password once to operate a range of services.

While "the intruders do not appear to have stolen passwords of Gmail users, ... the company quickly started making significant changes to the security of its networks after the intrusions.

"But the theft leaves open the possibility, however faint, that the intruders may find weaknesses that Google might not even be aware of," the report cited experts as saying.

"The theft began with an instant message sent to a Google employee in China who was using Microsoft?s Messenger program," the report added, citing the unnamed person with knowledge of the internal inquiry as saying.

Microsoft Wins Piracy Case Against Chinese Company

Microsoft won a Chinese court case over pirated software used by a local insurance company, scoring a point in its ongoing fight against intellectual property violations in China.

A Shanghai court on Thursday ordered Shanghai-based Dazhong Insurance to pay Microsoft 2.2 million yuan (US$320,000) in damages for using illegal copies of Microsoft software, the U.S. company said in a statement.

Dazhong was running 450 illegal copies of software spanning nine different Microsoft programs, including Windows XP and Microsoft Office, Microsoft said.

An employee of Dazhong Insurance reached by phone said the company was preparing to appeal the case.

The lawsuit was Microsoft's first against a large Chinese company for copyright infringement involving its software, Microsoft said. The damages were also the largest Microsoft has received in any case in China, it said.

The case follows another victory for Microsoft last year, when a Chinese court sentenced four people to jail for selling a popular pirated version of Windows XP called Tomato Garden.

China's software piracy rate was 80 percent in 2008, a high figure but still down from previous years, according to a study by IDC and the Business Software Alliance. Illegal versions of Windows XP, Microsoft Office and other programs are widely used in Chinese homes and offices.

McAfee Antivirus Program Goes Berserk, Freezes PCs

Computers in companies, hospitals and schools around the world got stuck repeatedly rebooting themselves Wednesday after an antivirus program identified a normal Windows file as a virus.

McAfee Inc. confirmed that a software update it posted at 9 a.m. Eastern time caused its antivirus program for corporate customers to misidentify a harmless file. It has posted a replacement update for download.

McAfee could not say how many computers were affected, but judging by online postings, the number was at least in the thousands and possibly in the hundreds of thousands.

McAfee said it did not appear that consumer versions of its software caused similar problems. It is investigating how the error happened "and will take measures" to prevent it from recurring, the company said in a statement.

The computer problem forced about a third of the hospitals in Rhode Island to postpone elective surgeries and stop treating patients without traumas in emergency rooms, said Nancy Jean, a spokeswoman for the Lifespan system of hospitals. The system includes Rhode Island Hospital, the state's largest, and Newport Hospital. Jean said patients who required treatment for gunshot wounds, car accidents, blunt trauma and other potentially fatal injuries were still being admitted to the emergency rooms.

In Kentucky, state police were told to shut down the computers in their patrol cars as technicians tried to fix the problem. The National Science Foundation headquarters in Arlington, Va., also lost computer access.

Intel Corp. appeared to be among the victims, according to employee posts on Twitter. Intel did not immediately return calls for comment.

Peter Juvinall, systems administrator at Illinois State University in Normal, said that when the first computer started rebooting it quickly became evident that it was a major problem, affecting dozens of computers at the College of Business alone.

"I originally thought it was a virus," he said. When the tech support people concluded McAfee's update was to blame, they stopped further downloads of the faulty software update and started shuttling from computer to computer to get the machines working again.

In many offices, personal attention to each PC from a technician appeared to be the only way to fix the problem because the computers

weren't receptive to remote software updates when stuck in the reboot cycle. That slowed the recovery.

It's not uncommon for antivirus programs to misidentify legitimate files as viruses. Last month, antivirus software from Bitdefender locked up PCs running several different versions of Windows.

However, the scale of this outage was unusual, said Mike Rothman, president of computer security firm Securosis.

"It looks to be a train wreck," Rothman said.

Symantec Releases Norton 2011 Public Betas

Norton Internet Security 2010 is PCMag's current Editors' Choice for security suite, and Norton AntiVirus 2010 is a great choice for standalone antivirus, but what's next for Norton?

Rather than rest on its laurels, Symantec has taken the fight for computer security into new battlegrounds and released the beta versions of Norton Internet Security 2011 Norton AntiVirus 2011.

Dan Nadir, director of consumer product management at Symantec, reports that the development team established a specific design goal for 2011 to "become the most recommended in consumer software and services." To that end, Symantec is extending the existing strengths of the Norton products and also adding free products and services.

Why give away protection? Nadir said that 84 percent of all spam is sent from computers infected by botnets, so users with no protection have a negative impact on the entire community.

"We believe that users who get helped in their moment of need will remember Norton down the road when they decide to protect themselves," he said.

The Download Insight feature in the current Norton products analyzes files downloaded using supported browsers and prevents malicious files from ever reaching your desktop. Nadir said that this is just one layer of protection; even if you use a browser that's not supported Norton will scan the file as soon as the download completes. Still, it's best to head off the dangerous download as early as possible. The 2011 products extend Download Insight to additional browsers including Chrome, Opera, and Netscape and to files received through popular IM, e-mail, and P2P clients.

The existing Norton Insight feature scans your system, identifies programs that are "Norton Trusted" (that is, actively verified by Symantec), and supplies a trust-level rating for other applications. In the 2011 products, users will get additional information about the files on their systems along with an option to compare their statistics with the community's average.

System Insight (found on the "back" of the main window in the 2010 products) graphs the CPU and memory usage by the system as a whole and by Norton. System Insight 2.0 in the 2011 products tracks performance for all active applications and warns the user if a particular process

is hogging the CPU, memory, or disk.

In my testing, the Norton products have managed to plow through most installation problems caused by malware, problems that balk installation for many other products. Occasionally, though, a system is so infested that you can't even install Norton to clean it up. That's when you bring out the big guns. The Norton Bootable Recovery Tool (affectionately called "Norbert") scans and cleans your computer without ever launching your possibly compromised operating system.

Previously, users had to download and burn an ISO image of the NBRT CD, a daunting task for some. The enhanced NBRT for 2011 automatically burns a bootable CD, DVD, or USB drive and adds any necessary drivers. However, because it relies on WinPE for its operating system, Symantec can't give it away. To create the bootable tool on a PC that doesn't have Norton installed you'll need to supply the activation key from your Norton product.

Symantec recognizes that rogue security software is just plain nasty. It sneaks onto your system, often via hacked Web sites or "poisoned" ads, and warns that your computer is in desperate danger unless you register the product ($50 or more) for a full cleanup. Some add insult to injury by actually planting malware while pretending to clean it up. And these programs can be extremely tough to remove. Symantec quotes an FBI source as estimating these scams have cost users over $150 million.

The new Norton Power Eraser tool aims to terminate scareware and other especially persistent malware. Available as a free download, it scans the system using "special aggressive heuristics" to remove these nasty threats. Asked why Symantec didn't just put this technology in the main product, Nadir replied that the aggressive scan has a higher probability of false positives (identifying valid files as dangerous). When the 2011 products complete a scan, they'll ask if the user thinks malware is still present and, if so, offer to run Norton Power Eraser.

The Norton Safe Web toolbar, bundled with the current Norton products, installs in the browser and warns you if you try to access dangerous Web sites. It also marks up links in search results with icons to identify them as safe, iffy, or dangerous. That's important, because dangerous links abound even in the "top ten" search results. For shopping sites, it also verifies transaction safety. Along with the release of the 2011 products, Symantec will make a standalone version of Norton Safe Web freely available to all.

Facebook is another hotbed of security threats. Has your friend asked you to join in playing a new game, or was your friend played by a malicious Facebook application? If you fall for the scam, you become a new carrier for the infection, and your other friends are the next victims. The Norton Safe Web for Facebook app scans your feed for dangerous links, giving you a chance to warn any wayward friends who've fallen for a Facebook scam. Nadir noted that limitations on Facebook applications prevent this tool from running in the background, so users should simply scan every so often.

One more thing: I asked Nadir about the problems I've reported regarding online support agents who improperly steer customers toward Symantec's $99 malware cleanup service. He said Symantec has been "aggressively working with the teams" to ensure they always notify users about the free options that are available and added that there are now more free tools than ever. If a Norton user is having trouble getting the product

installed, the support agents absolutely should direct them to the Norton
Bootable Resource Tool and Norton Power Eraser.

All of these tools mentioned here are now available as free public
betas. Want to see what's coming? Just click the links:

* Norton AntiVirus 2011 beta
<http://us.rd.yahoo.com/dailynews/zd/tc_zd/storytext/250197/35869798/
SIG=122n6umd1/*http://www.symantec.com/redirects/norton/norton_com/nav2011beta/>

* Norton Internet Security 2011 beta
<http://us.rd.yahoo.com/dailynews/zd/tc_zd/storytext/250197/35869798/
SIG=1225h9sqj/*http://www.symantec.com/redirects/norton/norton_com/nis2011beta/>

* Norton Power Eraser and Norton Bootable Recovery Tool
<http://us.rd.yahoo.com/dailynews/zd/tc_zd/storytext/250197/35869798/
SIG=122g3dc46/*http://www.symantec.com/redirects/norton/norton_com/rescuetools/>

* Norton Safe Web Lite - Beta
<http://us.rd.yahoo.com/dailynews/zd/tc_zd/storytext/250197/35869798/
SIG=126q9p9q1/*http://www.symantec.com/norton/beta/overview.jsp?pvid=Safe%20Webl
ite>

* Norton Safe Web for Facebook
<http://us.rd.yahoo.com/dailynews/zd/tc_zd/storytext/250197/35869798/
SIG=11ua46su5/*http://www.facebook.com/apps/application.php?id=310877173418>

Symantec watchers may have observed that the 2011 betas appeared a bit
earlier than in past years. That doesn't mean the final releases will
come earlier, though, just that Symantec has allowed some extra time to
fine-tune the new features.

          Amazon: North Carolina Bid To Track Taxes Violates Free Speech

Online retailer Amazon.com Inc. said it is taking a stand for free speech
by fighting a request from North Carolina tax authorities for information
on people who bought about 50 million items since 2003.

Amazon said disclosing the names and addresses of buyers, as requested,
would harm customers who may have bought controversial books or movies.
In a federal lawsuit filed in Seattle, the company also expressed
worries that the disclosures would diminish future sales.

North Carolina Revenue Secretary Kenneth Lay said his auditors don't
care what Amazon customers read or view.

"We're not asking what they bought," he said in an interview. "We're
asking how much they paid. We're not asking for specific titles."

At stake is potentially millions of dollars in taxes that North Carolina
contends Amazon was responsible for collecting for years before state
law was changed last summer.

Amazon wants the court to rule that North Carolina's collection effort

violates the company's rights to sell and its customers' rights to buy books and other items "free from government intrusion into the customers' reading, viewing and listening choices."

Amazon is asking the U.S. District Court in Seattle, where Amazon has its headquarters, to find North Carolina's request unconstitutional. The company said federal action would avoid varied decisions in multiple courts "in the event other states make similar demands for customer data." The lawsuit was filed Monday.

Lay said North Carolina tax collectors regularly ask corporations for information to help officials check whether customers are paying the taxes they owe.

"We're not doing anything here that we don't do with everybody else," he said.

North Carolina requires residents to pay taxes on online purchases if buying the same item in a physical store would result in a sales tax. But out-of-state retailers can't be forced to collect North Carolina's tax if it has no physical presence in the state.

The dispute is over the state's definition of whether the company had a North Carolina presence.

Last summer, state legislators passed a law making Amazon responsible for collecting sales taxes because it had a network of local affiliates - North Carolina residents who linked to products on their blogs, promote Web shopping deals and offer coupons.

Before the change was adopted, Amazon cut its ties to those North Carolina affiliates. The company also stopped working with affiliates in Rhode Island and Colorado because of collection-enforcement laws passed in those states.

But Lay said North Carolina will pursue tax collections for the years those affiliates were operating, even before the new law was passed.

"This is a fairness and equity issue," he said.

As the recession slashed tax collections, states have been stepping up efforts to collect from online retailers. In 2008, New York became the first state to treat local affiliates as enough of state presence to require retailers to collect sales taxes. Lawmakers in Iowa, New Mexico, Vermont and Virginia have considered similar laws, according to the Tax Foundation, a Washington, D.C.-based research group.

Last December, tax collectors auditing Amazon's compliance with North Carolina laws asked for documents listing all sales to customers in the state between Aug. 1, 2003, and Feb. 28, the company said. Amazon estimated the volume at 50 million items.

The company said that to protect customer privacy, it did not provide customers' names, addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses or other personally identifiable information.

State revenue agents visited Amazon's Seattle offices for meetings about the information request last month, then hand-delivered a letter seeking the personal data by a Monday deadline, the company said. Amazon said it did not respond before filing its lawsuit.

In 2007, federal prosecutors in Wisconsin withdrew a subpoena seeking the identities of thousands of people who bought used books through Amazon in a tax-evasion case after a judge ruled that customers have a right to keep their reading habits from the government.

Twitter Issues Alert About Phishing Scam

Twitter on Friday issued a warning about phishing e-mails that tell users they have unread messages on the micro-blogging site.

The e-mails, coming from a support@twitter.com e-mail address, tell members that they have unread, delayed, or undelivered messages on Twitter, and ask them to click a link in the e-mail to view the mystery messages.

Twitter denied sending out the e-mails.

"Twitter does not send any messages of this type; support@twitter.com does not send notifications in general," the company wrote on its status blog.

The e-mail itself does not appear to contain malware, Twitter said. The link in the e-mail actually takes users to a pharmaceutical site, though to get to that site, users are re-routed through several other sites, which could contain malware.

"We're actively pursuing measures to get these sites shut down; in the meantime, we recommend that you not click on the link and instead just delete any such e-mails you receive," Twitter said.

U.S. Students Suffering from Internet Addiction

Crackberry is no joke.

American college students are hooked on cellphones, social media and the Internet and showing symptoms similar to drug and alcohol addictions, according to a new study.

Researchers at the University of Maryland who asked 200 students to give up all media for one full day found that after 24 hours many showed signs of withdrawal, craving and anxiety along with an inability to function well without their media and social links.

Susan Moeller, the study's project director and a journalism professor at the university, said many students wrote about how they hated losing their media connections, which some equated to going without friends and family.

"I clearly am addicted and the dependency is sickening," said one student. "Between having a Blackberry, a laptop, a television, and an iPod, people have become unable to shed their media skin."

Moeller said students complained most about their need to use text

messages, instant messages, e-mail and Facebook.

"Texting and IM-ing my friends gives me a constant feeling of comfort," wrote one of the students, who blogged about their reactions. "When I did not have those two luxuries, I felt quite alone and secluded from my life."

Few students reported watching TV news or reading a newspaper.

The American Psychiatric Association does not recognize so-called Internet addiction as a disorder.

But it seems to be an affliction of modern life. In one extreme example in South Korea reported by the media, a couple allegedly neglected their three-month-old daughter, who died of malnutrition, because they were on the computer for up to 12 hours a day raising a virtual child.

In the United States a small private U.S. center called ReSTART, located near Redmond, Washington, opened last year in the shadow of computer giant Microsoft to treat excessive use of the Internet, video gaming and texting.

The center's website cites various examples of students who ran up large debts or dropped out of college due to their obsession.

Students in the Maryland study also showed no loyalty to news programs, a news personality or news platform. They maintained a casual relationship to news brands, and rarely distinguished between news and general information.

"They care about what is going on among their friends and families and even in the world at large," said Ph.D. student Raymond McCaffrey who worked on the study. Loyalty "does not seemed tied to any single device or application or news outlet."

The Digital Economy Bill

* The controversial Digital Economy Bill has been passed into law during the wash-up period, which sees outstanding legislation rushed through before a general election. *

* The most controversial aspects of the bill - which could see persistent illegal file-sharers disconnected from the web and copyright holders given the power to block access to websites hosting illegal content - survived the process. *

* What is the Digital Economy Bill? *

It is a broad suite of legislation aimed at bringing Britain into the digital age. It follows proposals about digital media set out in the Digital Britain White Paper published by the government in June 2009.

There are various aspects of the bill, which cover everything from local television provision and video game ratings to the powers of regulator Ofcom and how internet domain names are registered in the UK.

It has now been given Royal assent, which means that it is now law. The

government says that some measures will be introduced immediately, whilst others will come in over the next two months.

In practice, the next Parliament will be able to study the most contentious aspects of the bill before they are enacted and there will be an extended period of public consultation on many aspects.

* What happens now? *

The bill will touch on many areas of our digital lives. However, the aspect that has received the most attention is measures designed to curb illegal file-sharing.

This is basically a long set of instructions to Ofcom to draw up guidelines for rights holders and ISPs on how they deal with net piracy.

This will take at least six months, whilst regulator Ofcom consults with interested parties and gets clearance from the EU.

This code of conduct will then be introduced for a year.

Measures could include sending letters to people identified as downloading illegal content and asking them to stop and pointing out legal alternatives.

At the end of the 12 months there will a review. If illegal downloads do not fall (by at least 70%) Ofcom will be asked to consider whether technical measures – which could include limiting the speed or capacity of an individual's service or temporarily suspending their service – are needed.

These would likely be brought in in 2012, if agreed upon. Anyone targeted by the measures would be give the right to appeal, the government says.

* What does this mean for me? *

In theory, if you do not upload or download copyrighted content, these plans should not affect you. If you do, the government and creative industries hope that these measures will eventually encourage you to use legal services.

* Is cutting people off from the net the only controversial aspect of the bill? *

No. There are also concerns about how the file-sharing measures could affect public wi-fi services. Specifically, people are concerned that the owner of a connection could be held liable even if they are not personally responsible for downloading pirated material.

So, for instance, if someone used wireless connectivity in a cafe to download free content, the cafe owner would be held responsible. Universities and libraries are also concerned about this aspect.

Opponents are also concerned about laws to force internet service providers to block websites that host copyright free material.

The part of the bill that refers to this, Clause 18, was dropped by the government during the wash-up period. But a new amendment was inserted elsewhere, giving the government similar powers.

Originally the clause was intended to future-proof the legislation against other methods of copyright theft not yet thought about.

While it still allows copyright owners to force service providers to block access to certain sites, the process will now be subject to further debate and would need approval before being implemented.

* Why are these measures being brought in? *

The government says it wants to protect the UK's creative industries, which it says is under threat from piracy.

It is difficult to measure how much illegal file-sharing is going on. It is reported that more than half of all the traffic on the net in the UK is content being shared illegally but service providers say they cannot measure it exactly.

The creative industries estimate that six million people in the UK regularly file-share copyright content without permission, costing the industries revenue that they cannot recoup.

A recent industry study, by economics firm TERA Consultants, estimated that the UK's creative industries experienced losses of ´£1.2bn in 2008 due to piracy.

But campaign groups contest these figures and argue that the music industry has been slow to adapt to the internet age. They say that the legislation has been brought into appease big business, whilst penalising individuals.

* Why else do people oppose the bill? *

MPs from all parties have voiced concern that the laws have not received enough debate and have been rushed through parliament.

Campaigners say that the legislation will not work and will only drive illegal file-sharing underground.

They are also concerned that innocent people could be caught out by the legislation if their net connections are hijacked by pirates.

Companies such as Google have expressed concerns about the plans to block websites, which it says could result in legitimate content also being blocked.

Some ISPs have also long said they do not want to become the internet police, and have also pointed out that they are mere conduits of the traffic on the net.

* How will illegal file-sharers be detected? *

The responsibility of tracking down pirates will lie with content rights owners, although ISPs will bear some of the costs.

They plan to monitor websites which offer links to copyright content and then obtain the Internet Protocol (IP) address of the online computer being used to share that data.

ISPs tend to own blocks of IP addresses, so it is relatively simple to

identify the broadband account holder that is tied to a particular IP
address at a particular time.

* Will the proposals reduce illegal file-sharing? *

The music industry hopes so, but campaigners are sceptical.

The difficulty is that the problem is a moving target. More persistent
file-sharers are already beginning to use software which masks their IP
address while online, and the files being exchanged are encrypted, so it
is harder for ISPs to detect.

However, the music and film industries are more likely attempting to
target the "soft, underbelly" of file-sharing: the teenagers who are
doing it because they are either apathetic or believe they can get away
with it.

They hope that the threat of being watched will be enough to prompt
these people to use legitimate services.

But targeting these groups raises another difficult issue in the debate
about temporarily suspending the accounts of file-sharers: they may be
sharing their internet connection. Teenagers are likely to be using a
connection at their parents' homes, and shared housing may see a number
of independent users with just one file-sharer in their midst.

* How have other countries dealt with the problem? *

Countries around the world are grappling with how to control internet
piracy.

In the US, student Joel Tenebaum, who has admitted downloading 800
songs, was last year ordered to pay $675,000 (´£412,000) to various
record labels after being found guilty on 31 charges of sharing music
online.

In May 2009, the French parliament passed legislation which would see a
new state-agency sending warning letters to file sharers. If they are
caught three times, they will be cut off.

There have been protests against similar proposed legislation in
Australia and New Zealand.

In response to the French legislation, European politicians ruled that
cutting off someone's internet connection could be a breach of their
human rights.

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request. Send requests to: dpj@atarinews.org